



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

### **NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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#### **NOAA'S FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, located 100 miles off the Texas/Louisiana coast and managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is seeking to fill seats on a new advisory council being formed to represent the public's interests in sanctuary matters and provide advice to its manager.

The 11-member Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary Advisory Council will consist of eight voting non-governmental members and three non-voting federal government agency members. The sanctuary is seeking applicants to represent recreational diving, diving operation, oil and gas industry, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, research, education and conservation interests.

Applicants will be chosen based upon their particular expertise and experience in relation to the seat for which they are applying; community and professional affiliations; philosophy regarding the protection and management of marine resources; and other considerations. Applicants chosen as members should expect to serve three-year terms. Council meetings will take place at least once every three months and will be open to the public.

"Sanctuary advisory councils have proven to be an invaluable source of advice and input by members of the community regarding the management of our national marine sanctuaries, America's ocean treasures," said George P. Schmahl, manager of Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary. "We are thrilled that Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary will soon have its own advisory council, and we look forward to working with its members."

Advisory council member application package may be obtained by calling (979) 846-5942. Completed applications should be mailed to Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary; ATTN – Sanctuary Advisory Council Applications; 1200 Briarcrest Dr., Suite 4000, Bryan, TX 77802. Applications must be received by August 15, 2005.

Located in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary includes three separate areas, known as East Flower Garden, West Flower Garden, and Stetson Banks. The sanctuary was designated on January 17, 1992. Stetson Bank was added to the sanctuary in 1996. The Flower Garden and Stetson banks harbor the northernmost coral reefs in the continental United States and serve as regional reservoirs of shallow-water reef fishes and invertebrates.

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NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program manages the National Marine Sanctuary System, which includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources. The NMSP seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs.

The National Ocean Service manages the NMSP, and balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

An agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through research to better understand atmospheric and climate variability and to manage wisely our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Internet:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Ocean Service - <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Program - <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary – <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>